

## **Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay, Washington**

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The Olympia or native oyster, *Ostrea conchaphila*, is native to the Pacific Coast of North America and was common in Puget Sound prior to the arrival of European settlers. Over harvest in the late 1800s, combined with severe pollution in the first half of the 20th century from pulp and paper mills, drove Puget Sound stocks to near extinction. Skagit County Marine Resources Committee, working in cooperation with Puget Sound Restoration Fund, City of Anacortes, Swinomish and Samish Tribes, Taylor Shellfish Farms and other community partners, initiated a project to establish two Olympia oyster reefs in Fidalgo Bay near Anacortes, Washington. One site in South Fidalgo Bay, having stable substrate, standing water at low tide, and an absence of oyster drills, was selected for seed planting (20,000) in 2002. One year survival (~95%) and growth (from 25 mm to 42 mm shell length) were excellent, and will be monitored again in future years. Additional seed planted in 2003 and 2004 are also doing very well. Experimental studies with various rock/shell substrate combinations at a second site are exploring the best options for artificial reef creation. Additional plantings, and monitoring for survival and growth, will continue for the foreseeable future.